

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) An automated method for referring a prospective customer to one or more prospective dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services comprising:

using a computer system, ~~to prompting~~ the prospective customer to enter customer information about the prospective customer, including information about the identify and location of the customer;

using the computer system, ~~to receivinge~~ customer information about the prospective customer, including information about the identify and location of the customer;

using the computer system, ~~to locatinge~~ a first dealer of automobiles and/or automobile services that had a prior contact with the prospective customer by searching a database of contact information, the database of contact information including historical data about prior contacts between a plurality of prospective customers and a plurality of dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services, including information about:

the identity and location of each of the dealers; and

prior contacts which the prospective customers had with each dealer, including the reason for each prior cont;

using the computer system, ~~to locatinge~~ the a-reason for the prior contact between the prospective customer and the first dealer by searching the database of contact information, the located reason having beeing for servicing a vehicle;

using the computer system, ~~to locatinge~~ a second dealer of automobiles and/or automobile services that had a prior contact with the prospective customer by

searching the database of contact information, the located second dealer being located further from the prospective customer than the first dealer;

using the computer system, ~~to-locating~~ the a-reason for the prior contact between the prospective customer and the second dealer by searching the database of contact information, the located reason having been ~~ing~~ for purchasing a vehicle;

using the computer system, ~~to-determining~~ that one of the located dealers should be given preference over the other located dealer in a communication to the prospective customer which refers the prospective customer to at least one of the located dealers based on the located reasons the person had prior contacts with the located dealers, the computer system being programmed to give preference to a prior contact for the reason of purchasing a vehicle as compared to the reason of servicing a vehicle, the determining resulting in the second dealer being given preference over the first dealer because of the programmed preference; and

using the computer system, ~~to-communicating~~ information to the prospective customer which refers the prospective customer to at least the second dealer, the information being organized or otherwise presented in a manner that gives preference to the second dealer over the first dealer, notwithstanding that the second dealer is further from the prospective customer than the first dealer.

2. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1 wherein the information about the identity of the prospective customer includes at least a portion of the prospective customer's name.

3. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1 wherein the information about the location of the prospective customer includes at least one from the group consisting of the prospective customer's address, zip code, city, or state.

4 – 9. (Canceled).

10. (Currently amended) The automated method of claim 1 further comprising:

repeating the first three steps in connection with a different prospective customer;

the computer system failing to locate in the database any prior contact between the different prospective customer and a dealer of automobiles and/or automobile services;

using the computer system, to ~~to~~ locating in the database one or more dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services that are near the different prospective customer; and

delivering information to the different prospective customer about at least one of the located dealers that are near the different prospective customer.

11. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1 wherein the communicated information is divided into a plurality of sets.

12. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 11 wherein each set lists dealers that had a prior contact with the customer for the same reason.

13. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 11 wherein the communicated information is configured such that only one of the sets is viewable at a time.

14. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 11 wherein the communicated information is configured such that one of the sets has a link leading to another of the sets.

15. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 11 wherein the communicated information is configured such that the sets are displayed in order of the preference.

16. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 11 wherein each dealer listed in each set has a link for displaying a map of its location.

17. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 11 wherein each dealer listed in each set has a link for displaying directions to its location.

18. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1 wherein the searching the database locates a prior contact between the prospective customer and a third dealer of automobiles and/or automobile services for the reason of purchasing a vehicle on a different date than the contact with the second dealer and wherein the communicating information gives preference to the prior contact with the most recent date.

19. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 18 wherein the giving preference includes highlighting the prior contact with the most recent date.

20. (Previously presented) A system for referring a prospective customer to one or more prospective dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services, the system comprising a central computer/server and a database configured to perform the automated method of claim 1:

21 – 22 (canceled).

23. (Currently amended) An automated method for referring prospective customers to one or more prospective dealers comprising:

~~a) using a computer system,~~ prompting a first prospective customer to enter customer information about the first prospective customer;

~~b) using the computer system,~~ receiving customer information about the first prospective customer;

~~e) using the computer system,~~ querying a database using the customer information from the first customer that contains:

~~(1)~~dealer information about the identity and location of a plurality of dealers; and

~~(2)~~contact information about prior contacts between one or more of the dealers and one or more prospective customers, the query generating at least one prior

contact between the first prospective customer and at least one of the dealers in the database;

d) using the computer system, reporting information about at least one of the dealers that had a prior contact with the first prospective customer to the first prospective customer;

e) using the computer system, prompting a second prospective customer to enter customer information about the second prospective customer;

f) using the computer system, receiving customer information about the second prospective customer;

e) using the computer system, querying the database using the customer information from the second customer; the query failing to generate any prior contact between the second prospective customer and any of dealers in the database;

d) using the computer system, locating one or more dealers that are near the location of the second prospective customer; and

e) using the computer system, delivering information about at least one of the dealers that are near the second prospective customer to the second prospective customer.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the customer information about the first or the second prospective customer comprises the prospective customer's address and zip code.

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the customer information about the first or the second prospective customer includes at least one from the group consisting of the prospective customer's name, address, zip code, city or state.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the contact information in the database includes information about the reason for each prior contacts, such as to purchase a vehicle, service a vehicle, or purchase a part.

27. (Previously presented) The method of claim 26 wherein the querying using customer information from the first customer results in contacts with different dealers for different reasons and wherein the delivering information to the first customer gives preference to one of the reasons.

28. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23 wherein a list of the dealers nearest to the second customer is returned.

29. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein the results are divided into a plurality of sets.

30. (Previously presented) The method of claim 29 wherein each set lists dealers that had a prior contact with the customer for the same reason.

31. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 wherein only one of the sets is viewed at a time.

32. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 wherein one of the sets has a link leading to another of the sets.

33. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 wherein the sets are displayed in order of the preference.

34. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 wherein each dealer listed in each set has a link for displaying a map of its location.

35. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 wherein each dealer listed in each set has a link for displaying directions to its location.

36. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 wherein each set lists dealers with the most recent prior contacts first.

37. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 wherein each set highlights the dealer with the most recent prior contact.

38. (Previously presented) A system for referring a prospective customer to one or more sellers comprising:

a database system configured to look into a database to locate information about prior contacts the prospective customer has had with the sellers; and

a reporting system configured to provide information to the prospective customer about at least one of the sellers with whom the customer had a prior contact, giving preference to the seller with whom the prospective customer had a prior contact for one of several reasons, such as to purchase a vehicle, service a vehicle, or purchase a part, when the customer had prior contacts for different reasons with two or more of the sellers.

39. (Previously presented) A system for referring a prospective customer to one or more sellers comprising:

a database system configured to identify at least one seller with whom the prospective customer had at least one prior contact and at least one seller that is near to the prospective customer; and

a reporting system configured to provide information to the prospective customer about at least one of the identified sellers, giving preference to the seller with whom the customer had a prior contact, if such a seller is identified by the database system.